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11 April 1979

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WESTERN EUROPE REVIEW

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The problems that led to the resignation
of Prime Minister Tindemanns and the
longest period of government formation
in Belgium's history are no nearer a solu-
tion than they were six months ago.

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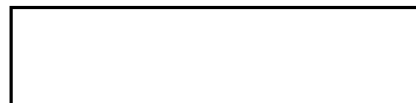
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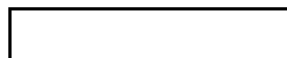
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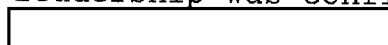
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France: The Socialist Party Congress



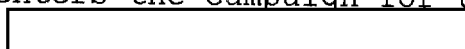
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Unlike the Giscardian Union for French Democracy (UDF), Chirac's Gaullists, and the Communist Party, all of whose presidential candidates are already known, the French Socialist Party will choose its candidate for the 1981 presidential election by a vote of party members, probably in the fall of 1980. The first act in this drama was played out at the party congress last weekend in Metz, where Francois Mitterrand's leadership was confirmed by a plurality of 47 percent.



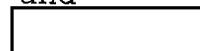
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Mitterrand had been sagging badly in the polls, at one point coming in third behind his principal rivals Michel Rocard and Pierre Mauroy, and the congress' vote of confidence, added to the party's good showing in the recent cantonal elections, should boost his stock. The failure of rival factions to resolve their differences at the congress, however, means that the party is deeply divided as it enters the campaign for the European election in June.



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But this probably will not have much effect on the party's showing in the election. The Socialists should be aided by the special nature of the contest and their pro-European image, but also by indications that voters will above all be judging the social and economic policies of the government. Socialist voters have in the past proved tolerant of intraparty quarrels, and polls taken in early April before the Socialist congress showed the Giscardian UDF and the Socialists running neck and neck with 26 percent and 25 percent, respectively.



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Eventually, however, the divisiveness displayed at the congress is likely to take its toll on the party. In fact, what may be at stake is the long-range credibility of the Socialist Party as an alternative on the national level to the present center-right coalition. The congress demonstrated overwhelming support among the rank and file for the political objective the party has sought since 1971--a Communist-Socialist alliance pledged

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to break definitively with the capitalist system. Nonetheless, supporters of Michel Rocard and Pierre Mauroy racked up 38 percent of the delegates' votes. To get a majority in the party's governing bodies without Mauroy and Rocard with whom he refused to compromise, Mitterrand had no choice but to look to the left for votes, and he announced at Metz that he favored an alliance with the leftwing CERES faction, with whom he has been feuding for four years. This blatantly opportunistic alliance is apparently now under negotiation and the horse trading could conceivably be stretched out beyond 10 June in order to mute any effects that CERES' anti-European image might have on the Socialists' score in the European election. The US Embassy in Paris says that Mitterrand appears to be operating on the theory that 50 percent of France is already in the left camp and will stay there as long as the economy continues to falter: any change in the Socialist strategy, as defined in 1971, is therefore both dangerous and unnecessary, because that strategy has twice carried the Socialists to the edge of victory. Whether or not this is actually Mitterrand's analysis, he has little choice, since Michel Rocard has coopted the moderate "updated" approach to Socialist strategy. [REDACTED]

An alliance with CERES risks making Mitterrand prisoner of an extreme left whose proposals he has in the past found untimely and excessive. Banished from the national leadership, Michel Rocard announced that he and his supporters will establish a formal opposition group within the party but that he will not contest the presidential nomination if Mitterrand wants it. This does not mean that the battle for the nomination is over, although Rocard probably has only a slim chance of taking it from Mitterrand if the latter wants it. But Rocard has greater strength in the party as a whole than he has among the delegates at the recent congress. [REDACTED]

Rocard supporters are present in every federation, ranging from an absolute majority in Finistere and Maine et Loire to a minimum representation elsewhere that rarely falls below 15 percent. This is a base from which Rocard can stake out policy positions that will undoubtedly be closer than Mitterrand's to the views of the essentially moderate Socialist electorate. [REDACTED]

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In addition, many Socialist militants at the recent congress apparently voted for Mitterrand out of sheer loyalty and might be tempted to vote otherwise when it becomes a matter of actually designating a presidential candidate. Polls show that Michel Rocard would be a stronger presidential candidate than Mitterrand, and some Socialists say it would be better to go down to defeat in 1981 with him than with Mitterrand, who would at that point be a three-time loser in the presidential sweepstakes. [REDACTED]

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In reality, Rocard and Mitterrand agree on basic strategy, but it is useful for each to point up the nuances of their differences. If Mitterrand is the "prince of ambiguity," in Prime Minister Barre's famous phrase, Rocard is certainly a high priest of equivocation. Rocard argues, for example, that the break with capitalism must be gradual and take into account the role of the market place. For Mitterrand supporters and the CERES faction, this policy is tantamount to "reformism" and eventually an alliance with the Giscardian forces. The precipitous drop in CERES strength at the congress (from almost 25 percent to 15 percent) and the relatively strong combined showing by Rocard and number-two man Pierre Mauroy (21 percent and 17 percent) may indicate that the strength of the far left in the party is diminishing. [REDACTED]

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CERES losses worked almost exclusively to Rocard's advantage. The shadow of the presidential elections apparently fostered a bipolarization of the party that favored the two most likely presidential candidates--Mitterrand and Rocard--and worked to the disadvantage of Pierre Mauroy and CERES leader Jean-Pierre Cheuene-ment. [REDACTED]

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A basic question is whether Mitterrand's projected alliance with CERES and his stiff defense of the more doctrinaire aspects of socialist doctrine will alienate uncommitted moderate voters who have been flirting with socialism. If it does, and if it turns out that Rocard's vision of the future Socialist Party is closer to the voters', Mitterrand's victory at the congress may eventually be seen as pyrrhic. Mitterrand is France's most famous political Lazarus, but not even he can hope to go on rising from the dead forever. [REDACTED]

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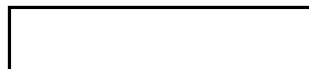
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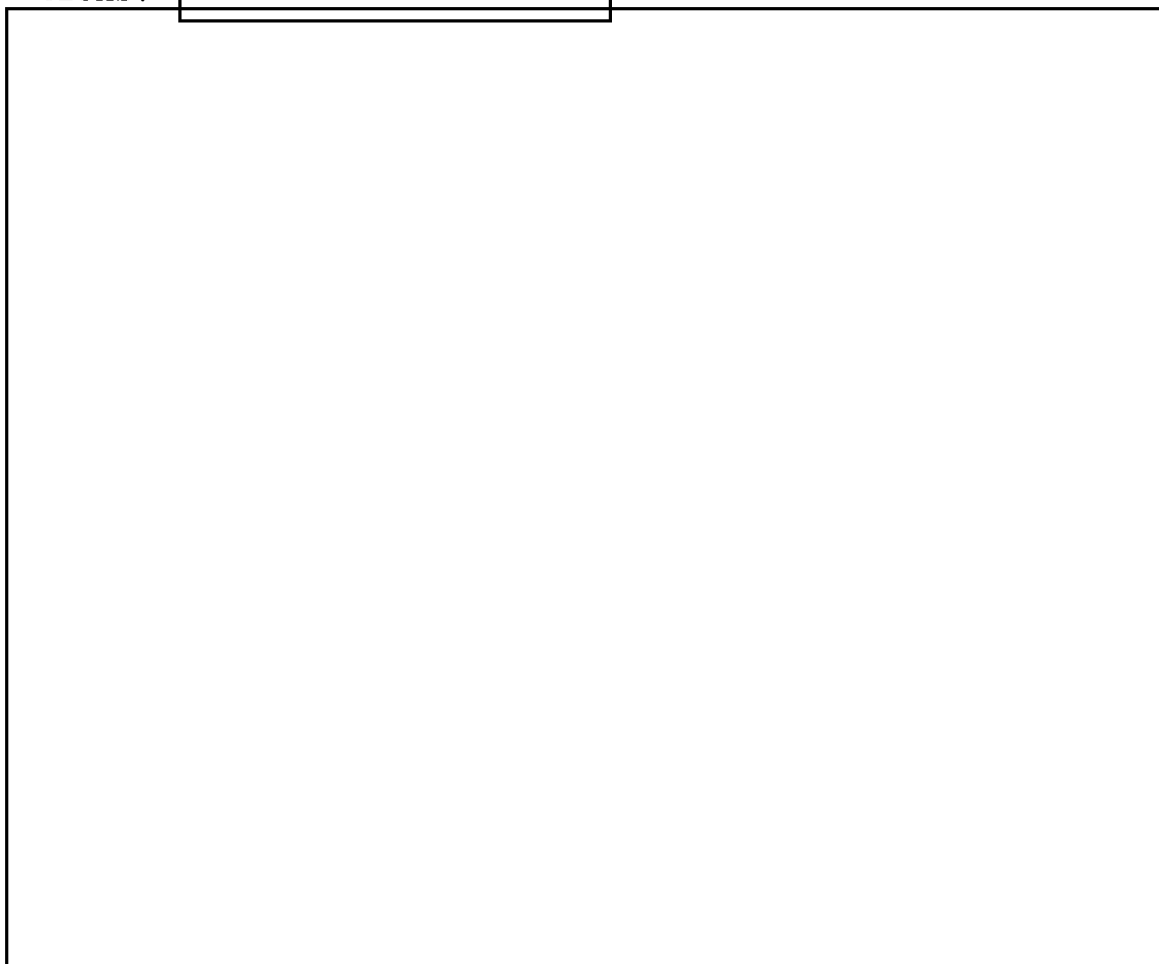
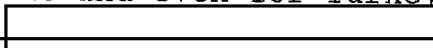
Turkey: The Kurdish Problem



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The resurgence of Kurdish separatist sentiment in Iran and continued Kurdish unrest in Iraq have evoked fears among Turkey's leaders that Turkish Kurds may follow suit. Important social and political factors militate against a mass uprising of Turkish Kurds. Nonetheless, Turkey is already beset by deepening economic and internal security crises, and even limited Kurdish unrest might pose a severe test for the Ecevit government and even for Turkey's democratic institutions.

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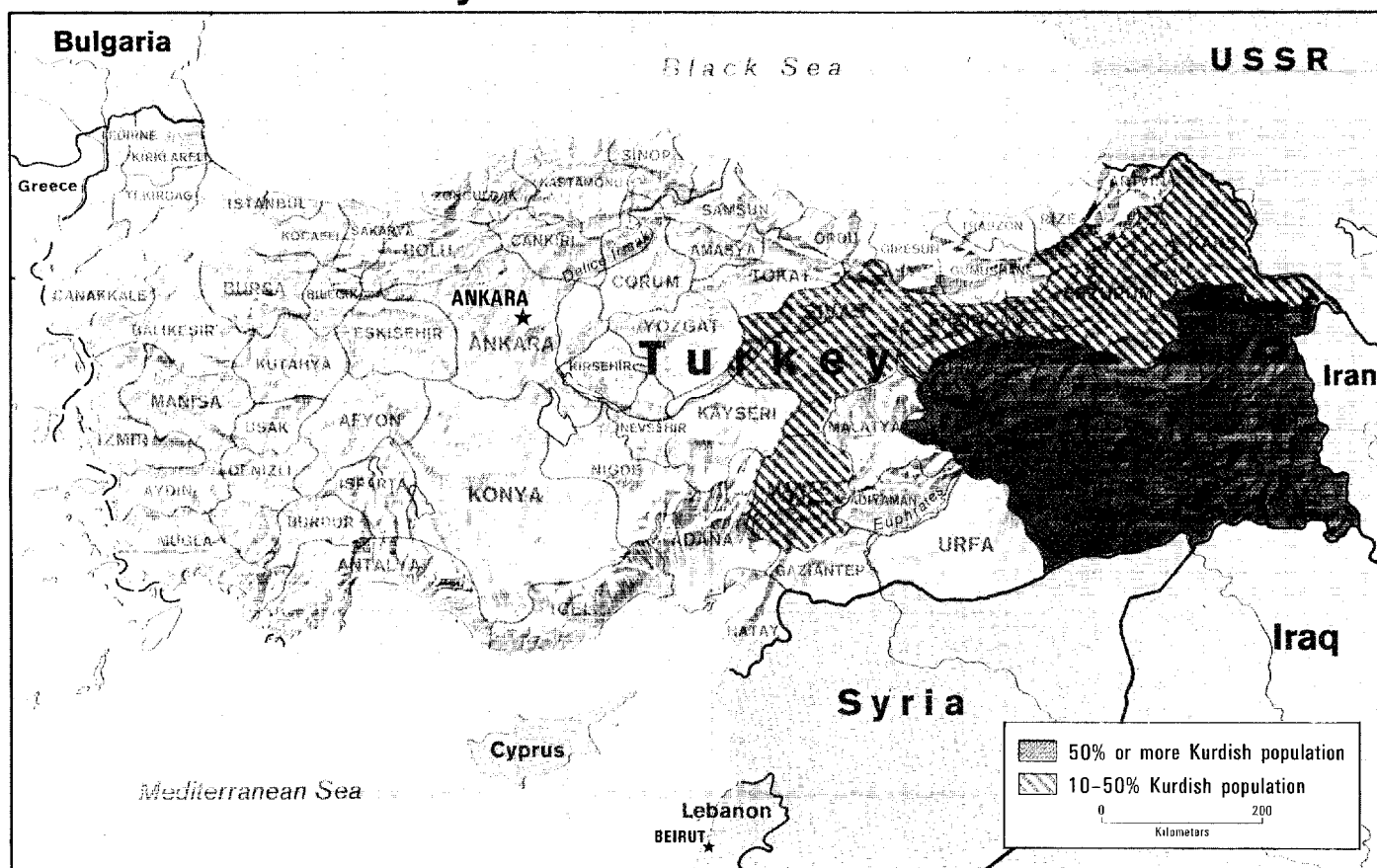
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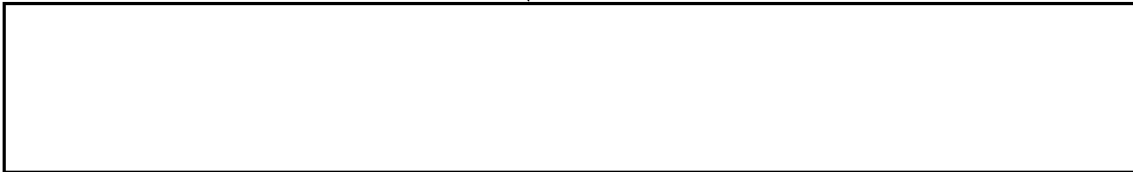
Kurdish Areas in Turkey



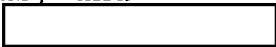
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Profile of a People: Resistance and Reaction

Some 10-15 million Kurds inhabit the rugged highlands cutting across Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Soviet Armenia; the largest percentage--roughly 5 million--resides in Turkey. The Kurds' distinct language and culture, seminomadic life, and tribal loyalties have endowed them with a sense of national identity. Their allegiance to the host states is often tenuous, and there have been frequent Kurdish rebellions. 

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Turkey's Kurds, driven not just by a general desire for self-rule but by unhappiness over Ataturk's modernizing and centralizing reforms, staged large-scale uprisings on four occasions earlier in this century. Turkish authorities ruthlessly suppressed these revolts and subsequently sought--unsuccessfully--to eliminate all manifestations of Kurdish culture and nationalism. The Kurdish language was proscribed, cultural activities were limited, and Kurds thereafter were characterized officially as "eastern Turks." 

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More recently, with the advent of Turkish democracy in the late 1940s, government policy has been to favor cooptation over suppression. Significant numbers of Kurds have been recruited into the ruling elite--albeit probably not at a rate commensurate with their percentage of the population; Kurds are particularly underrepresented in the military. One Deputy Prime Minister in the Ecevit government, Hikmet Cetin, is a Kurd, as is Kamran Inan, the number-two man in the opposition Justice Party. Most party delegations in Parliament include at least some Kurds. This is especially true of Ecevit's Republican People's Party, which contains a group of about 35 deputies led by Minister of Public Works Serafettin Elci. 

Socioeconomic Underdevelopment and Government Neglect

Ankara's efforts to coopt individual Kurds has not been matched by any comparable effort to develop the

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Kurdish regions, which remain backward in comparison to western Turkey. There is little industry, unemployment is very high, illiteracy approaches 80 percent, and such amenities as electricity, piped water, and passable roads are lacking in more than half of the villages. Although statistical data on the Kurdish regions are sketchy, one Turkish publication claims that these areas contain only 10 percent of state industrial investment and 2.7 percent of all commercial investments. This neglect can be explained by the remoteness of the Kurdish regions as much as by the mutual suspicions between Turks and Kurds. Educated Turks are reluctant to live and work in such "alien" rural areas, and neither public nor private investment has been substantial. [REDACTED]

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In addition, local Kurdish leaders, fearing that development would upset the prevailing highly traditional social structure and their own positions, have often been unreceptive to even the limited efforts made by Ankara to develop the Kurdish regions. Indeed, Kurdish tribal chiefs and notables have been known to "deliver" the votes of their followers to politicians for pledges of noninterference in local affairs. Urbanization has weakened the hold of such leaders as Kurdish youth in the cities, however, and it is among these young people, many of them educated, that nationalist Kurdish sentiment is strongest. [REDACTED]

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Persistence of Kurdish Nationalism

Neither the twin forces of government suppression and cooptation nor the conservative influence of local Kurdish chieftains has been able to quash the Kurdish urge for autonomy or independence. The Kurdish language flourishes, and indeed most Kurds are not fluent in Turkish. Clandestinely published Kurdish literature is available under-the-counter in Kurdish areas. And many overt "cultural associations" and covert "liberation groups" propagate the idea of autonomy and independence. [REDACTED]

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The reemergence of these groups broadly parallels the growth of the Turkish radical leftist student groups that appeared in the late 1960s. The radical groups often included a call for greater Kurdish autonomy in their programs, and Kurds were prominent in them for a

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time, although many Kurds eventually formed their own associations. Mahir Cahan, the most prominent martyr of the Turkish left, was a Kurd. The overt groups feature nonethnic names such as "Revolutionary Democratic Cultural Association" and "Revolutionary Peoples Liberation Association," since avowedly Kurdish organizations are still illegal. They insist that they are interested mainly in social progress and Turkish recognition of long-denied Kurdish cultural rights. The clandestine groups expound a mixture of leftist and nationalist rhetoric, and call openly for autonomy or independence. Through such names as "KAWA" (the name of a legendary Kurdish hero) and "KUK" (Kurdish National Liberation) they make no bones about their Kurdish identity. The overt and clandestine groups undoubtedly interact to some degree, and they may still cooperate with Turkish extreme leftists. [REDACTED]

Yet these driving forces of Kurdish nationalism suffer from the same factionalism that has weakened their Turkish counterparts. The cultural associations have small memberships, and the illegal groups elicit even less popular support. Although dominated by urbanized young Kurds, the illegal Kurdish groups do not seem popular even in the larger eastern towns. This fact probably stems from a generation and cultural gap between youthful, educated Kurds and the more conservative and tradition-bound majority [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The activist groups themselves, moreover, have long quarreled over whether to remain separate from other Turkish counterparts and seek independence, or to cooperate with the Turkish proletariat in its "battle against capitalism" as a way station to Kurdish autonomy within a Turkish state. [REDACTED]

Foreign Connections

The Turkish imagination has always been stirred by the thought that Turkish Kurds are being manipulated by other powers. Iranian and Iraqi Kurds have in fact cooperated with foreign powers in the past, usually to their own disadvantage. The short-lived Kurdish Republic established in Iran with Soviet backing in 1945, as well as the Iranian-backed Kurdish resistance in Iraq during 1974-75, were defeated because the Soviets and Iranians respectively withdrew their support. [REDACTED]

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Scarce and sketchy information on Turkish Kurds hinders any definitive statement of the nature of their relations with Kurds outside of Turkey or with foreign powers, but so far such ties seem to have been minimal. Moscow has a greater stake in good relations with the Turkish Government, and the warring Talabani and Barzani Kurdish factions in northern Iraq--who speak a different dialect--have abused Turkish Kurds as much as they have aided them. [REDACTED]

Even so, the possible impact on Turkish Kurds of an autonomous or independent Kurdistan in Iran, the fact that ethnic differences already have contributed to the raging political violence in the country, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] have been enough to make the government and the military nervous. [REDACTED]

Outlook

Despite Ankara's fears, the chances for another outbreak of mass Kurdish unrest in Turkey along the lines of earlier rebellions are not great. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The Kurds themselves are divided along tribal lines, and they disagree over ends (autonomy or independence) and means (violence or nonviolence). These differences and suspicions extend to the relations between Turkish Kurds and those in neighboring countries. And there seems to be no single Turkish Kurd capable of uniting these disparate tendencies and groups under a single banner. Perhaps even more important, the Kurds are aware of the large contingent of Army and security forces either stationed in Kurdish areas or capable of being transferred there at a moment's notice. [REDACTED]

Nonetheless, the potential for extensive Kurdish unrest is likely to persist and could grow if Iranian Kurds secure a greater degree of autonomy from the new Iranian regime. Isolated acts of violence, moreover, will continue. The Kurds are well-armed and will remain susceptible to separatist and pan-Kurdish sentiment, especially if Ankara continues to ignore their social and economic plight. They may see further opportunities if the government in Ankara is weakened by failure to come to grips with Turkey's staggering economic

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problems or with the spiral of political violence. And
heightened Kurdish unrest would in turn weaken the gov-
ernment even further.

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Norway: Political Stirrings

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Norway's nonsocialist parties, which criticized the minority Labor government last summer for what they consider its inept handling of relations with the USSR, now are attacking its industrial policy. Thus far, they have focused on the government's proposed arrangement with Volvo of Sweden--a complex package that was to be the keystone of Prime Minister Nordli's oil-for-technology policy--and the severe financial problems of Tandberg, a government-owned corporation. The nonsocialists probably have enough support to force a vote of confidence on the latter issues later this month, but they may prefer to allow the Laborites to remain in office, saddled with the lagging economy. Although opinion polls show strong support for the nonsocialists, they may have difficulty in developing sufficient cohesion to form a coalition.

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The rightist parties in January were prepared to vote against the Volvo deal on the grounds that it embodied overwhelming government interference in Norway's industrial future. If Volvo's Swedish stockholders had not turned the deal down just days before the Storting was to begin ratification debate, the nonsocialists, using party discipline because they saw the outcome depended on one or two votes, would have killed it. Ironically, they expected to have the support of the two Left Socialist Party parliamentary representatives who generally back the minority government. This small party opposed the Volvo deal because it would have brought foreign capitalists into Norwegian industry.

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In the Storting debate on Volvo, the opposition had planned to point to the bankruptcy of the government-owned Tandberg enterprise as an illustration of the government's inability to manage industry. Tandberg, a multiproduct electronics producer employing about 2,200 people, was taken over by the government in December 1977 after a period in which it had increasing difficulty competing in international markets. After a year

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of government ownership the firm is bankrupt and in need of further support. In a report on the corporation to the Storting last month, Prime Minister Nordli claimed that the government's investment saved 600 jobs and a high technology product line with export markets. But he could not deny the high cost. To the government's chagrin, the Storting elected to do a thorough investigation of the company before debating the issue later this month. Moreover, the rightist charge of mismanagement has been taken up by the Left Socialists--they say more jobs should have been saved. [REDACTED]

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Nordli could decide to make the vote on the Tandberg report a question of confidence, but he probably will opt not to take such a chance, despite the fact that the Left Socialists probably would vote with the government. Elections do not have to be called until 1981. [REDACTED]

25X1

February opinion polls that the nonsocialist parties continue to gain; over 50 percent of those polled now declare they would vote for one of the center-right parties. But Norwegian polls have been wrong--in the elections in 1977 they showed significant support for the right, but the left managed to win by one seat. [REDACTED]

25X1

Another worry for the nonsocialists is the ambivalence of the small Liberal Party, which, although non-socialist, frequently backs the Labor Party. The right could win an election, only to be prevented from forming a government through the defection of the Liberals. [REDACTED]

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Opposition leaders, in choosing their time to challenge the government, want to be sure they will win by a comfortable margin. Furthermore, some of them believe they should let Nordli carry the burden of a lagging economy a little longer before they step in, perhaps during an upswing. [REDACTED]

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Belgium: Who's in Charge? [REDACTED]

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The swearing in last week of Wilfried Martens as Belgium's new Prime Minister and head of the country's five-party coalition marks the end of the longest period of government formation in Belgium's history: 16 weeks since the elections, 25 weeks since former Prime Minister Tindemans resigned. What is perhaps most frustrating about the political crisis--for participants and observers alike--is that the problems that precipitated the crisis and caused it to drag on so long are no nearer a solution now than they were six months ago. In fact, the choice of prime minister seems to have been determined less from agreement among party leaders on the future government's program than from their weariness and shame over popular exasperation. [REDACTED]

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Debate over the formulation of the budget and over the timetable and content of a state reform program will test the political skills of the 43-year-old Martens, who has never held a Cabinet post. Indications are that the party presidents who finally accepted Martens' nomination as prime minister may make life difficult for him now that he has the job. Even Tindemans, who has just replaced Martens as president of the Flemish Social Christian Party (CVP), may prove to be a stumbling block.

State Reform Plans

Many proposals for constitutional revision to give greater autonomy to Belgium's linguistic communities have been discussed during the past three months. Martens will probably use the plan he proposed when he was formateur in January as the basis for the new government's negotiations. He suggested that the Brussels region should not have the same status as the Flemish and Walloon regions--a goal long advocated by a hardline faction in the CVP and opposed by the Brussels-based Francophone Democratic Front (FDF)--and that regionalization should take place in several stages. [REDACTED]

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25X1 The Martens plan calls for the establishment of a single Flemish assembly to exercise jurisdiction over Flemish regional affairs and over the cultural affairs of Flemish residents of Brussels and Flanders. A Walloon assembly would handle Walloon regional affairs and a Brussels assembly would manage Brussels regional affairs, but a separate francophone cultural assembly would be responsible for the cultural affairs of francophone residents of Brussels and Wallonia. In each of the three regions a regional executive, responsible to the regional assembly, would be created. Complicated though it sounds, this structure would be more streamlined than that proposed in the Egmont-Stuyvenberg accords of 1977. [REDACTED]

25X1 Another problem that will loom large is the delineation of the Brussels region. The CVP maintains that the region should be confined to the present capital of 19 communes. The six suburban communes on the periphery, where many francophones reside, would remain under Flemish control. Existing facilities for francophones in the six communes would be retained, with similar privileges guaranteed for the Flemish minority in Brussels. Flemish and francophone hardliners, however, fear that such proposals do not sufficiently advance the rights of the respective minorities, and Martens will be hard pressed to find a compromise acceptable to both linguistic groups. [REDACTED]

Coping With the Economy

Both Martens and Paul Vanden Boeynants, his predecessor as formateur, stressed the need to form a strong government quickly so that action could finally be taken on the ailing economy. The Socialists, however, maintain that a regionalization plan must precede decisions on the economy, because the regions will tackle their economic problems differently and the powers of the central government over economic affairs in a regionalized Belgium will take a long time to determine. [REDACTED]

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Taking matters into their own hands, trade unionists in Wallonia have come together in a front that cuts across traditional political loyalties. The front--drawn from francophone groups in the Socialist and Christian trade unions--issued its own proclamation in mid-March. Claiming that employers in Wallonia had

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failed to face up to their responsibilities, the proclamation called for devolution of economic and political power to Walloni, more public investment, sharing of work--a 36-hour work week--and other measures to stimulate the economy and protect workers' benefits. [REDACTED]

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Vanden Boeynants as formateur quickly picked up the ball and ran with his own economic package. He endorsed the 36-hour work week but included other points favorable to management: reduction in social security payments and a wage freeze. A subsequent rally by the trade union front drew 70,000 militants who summarily rejected Vanden Boeynants' proposals as too promanagement. Vanden Boeynants, eager not to jeopardize Martens' prospects, diluted his program to a bare outline on which all parties could readily agree. Martens clearly will have trouble enacting a strong economic program with the trade union federations pledged to resist an austerity program that demands too many sacrifices of labor. [REDACTED]

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Popular Unrest

The recent developments in the labor front are but one manifestation of increasing popular frustration with the slow-moving government. A poll published last month found that all of the dominant parties would have lost significant support in their respective regions had legislative elections been held then. Frustration appeared deepest in Wallonia, but throughout the country the electorate showed it is fed up with the community issue--or at least government handling of it--and that social and economic issues should be given priority. [REDACTED]

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Communal tensions will continue to demand the government's attention, however, as several incidents during the last few months make clear. Near the Dutch border, for example, lie the Fourons, a group of francophone villages technically located in Liege Province but administered by Flanders. A demonstration in the Fourons after a Flemish police dog bit a resident could have escalated into a bitter confrontation. But heavy rains, an effective police presence, and the discretion of FDF Cabinet ministers defused the tense atmosphere. Elsewhere, the Flemish Socialist Minister of Education, applying a strict interpretation of the language law, cut

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off government subsidies to a francophone school in the Flemish commune of Linkebeek in the Brussels periphery.

Outlook

Martens will have to display extraordinary leadership powers to achieve results on the many problems that await him. Though lacking charisma, he is highly respected for his organizational and political skills. In fact, he may be the only prime minister who can formulate the constitutional revisions which would enable the Parliament to take advantage of its mandate as a constituent assembly.

Yet, although no one wants to be held responsible for the failure of the government or its plans, it would be unrealistic to hope for a sudden outbreak of statesmanship among Martens' many interlocutors. Decisive movement in any direction may elicit equally decisive negative reactions from among the Cabinet, the party presidents, the Parliament, the unions, or other powerful groups. There is still a better than even chance that the European Parliament elections on 10 June will cause new shifts in party strengths and alignments requiring the formation of yet another government.

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